DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 169 UD 033 098

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TITLE Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process.
INSTITUTION Maine State Dept. of Education, Augusta.
SPONS AGENCY Centers for Disease Control (DHHS/PHS), Atlanta, GA.
PUB DATE 1996-01-00
NOTE 47p.
CONTRACT U871CC0109031-04
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Programs; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Participation; *Prevention; Program Development; Program Implementation; *Resilience (Personality)

ABSTRACT

This booklet is designed to assist people in implementing strategies to prevent negative outcomes for children. The process starts with the individual, acknowledging an inside-out approach to change. The next component in the model is a set of research-based facts that promote resilience by focusing on strengths instead of deficits. What follows is a process that recognizes the importance of everyone's involvement. The continuing improvement component recognizes the need to plan systematically and to assess and improve on current efforts continually. The last component in the process is a focus on support, which includes training, technical assistance, and the resources needed to implement effective prevention strategies. Suggestions are given for each of these components. Contains 67 references. Appendixes contain a graphic to illustrate the process, a definition of the educational phases of the process continuum, and an example of a continuing improvement plan. (SLD)

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FOSTERING HOPE:

A Prevention Process

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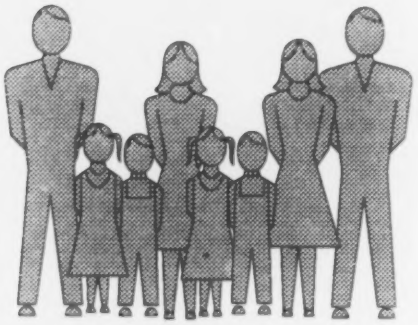

Keep in mind always the present you are constructing.
It should be the future you want.

- Alice Walker

January 1996
Maine Department of Education
and
Office of Substance Abuse

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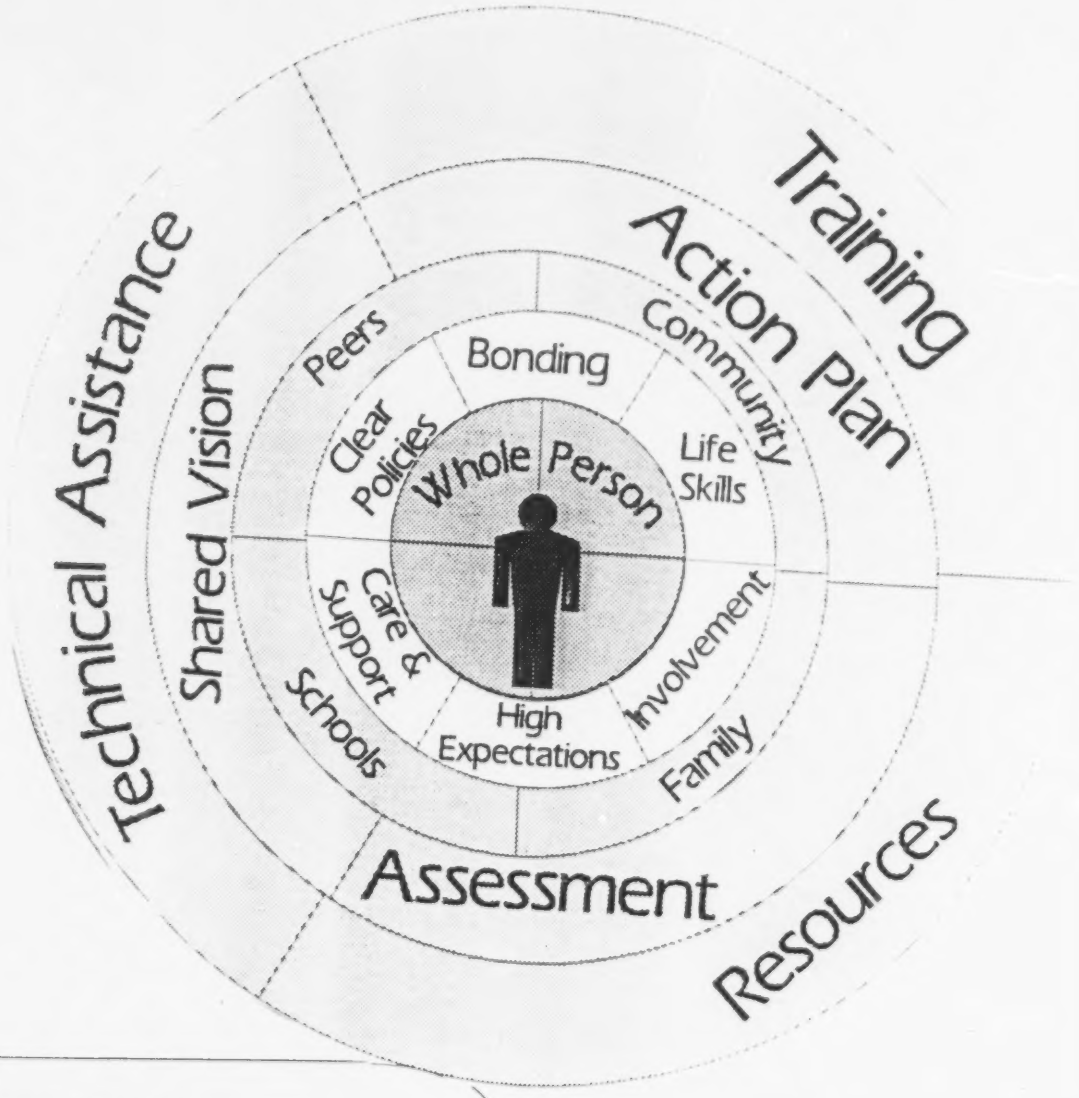
This document is printed 100% with federal funds under appropriation #013-05A-2717-132 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement #U871CC0109031-04

Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process



- Components for Fostering Resilience
- Community Stakeholders
- Continuing Improvement Plan
- Support

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FOSTERING HOPE: A PREVENTION PROCESS

Fostering Hope uses prevention as a process to create conditions that promote personal well being. By focusing on the individual's strengths and capacities, new opportunities are created for communities and educational systems to work collaboratively.

Prevention is an active, assertive process of creating conditions that promote well being. *Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process* promotes positive outcomes for youth and adults. At the core of this process is a set of common factors that help to promote well being.

Bonding - Engaging in Relationships of Care and Concern

Teaching and Learning Skills

Providing Clear and High Expectations

Demonstrating that All People are Valued

Providing Youth Opportunities for Meaningful Involvement

Focusing on Opportunities for Success

Setting Clear Guidelines/Rules Consistently Enforced

Constructing a Climate and Culture that Supports the Well Being of All People

The need for effective prevention efforts cuts across all age levels and communities; children are particularly worthy of attention.

Maine has much to be proud of in terms of the overall health and well being of our children. According to the National KIDS COUNT Data Book, Maine's children ranked fourth overall in the nation in 1988 and ninth in 1994. While it may seem heartening to rank in the nation's "top ten," the current data in Maine include some very disturbing trends:

- ✔ During 1993, 8,337 Maine school-age children were identified as being homeless.
- ✔ Nearly one quarter of Maine teenagers say they have seriously considered suicide, while over eight percent have attempted to take their own lives.*
- ✔ Maine's teen violent death rate increased from 50.5 per 100,000 in 1985 to 71.8 per 100,000 in 1991, moving Maine's rank from 9th to 27th in the nation.
- ✔ 17% of all students grades 6-12 do not feel safe at school (1995)
- ✔ The percent of boys who smoke half a pack of cigarettes or more per day reaches 24% at grade 12; for girls the rate at grade twelve is 33% (1995)
- ✔ 46% of high school seniors report using alcohol at least once per month (1995)
- ✔ 22% of all senior boys and 19% of all senior girls said that they use marijuana once or more a week (1995)
- ✔ 30% of all eighth graders have reported using inhalants (1995)
- ✔ As reported in the 1994 Maine Educational Assessment Health Subgroup results:
  - ✘ 37% of grade four students reported that "health is not discussed at home"
  - ✘ 68% of grade eight students reported that health schoolwork is discussed at home "a few times a year" or "never"
- ✔ According to the 1990 Maine census, for the population age 25 and older 168,460 (21% of the population) had not attained a high school completion credential
- ✔ During 1993, there were 167 adult suicides in Maine
- ✔ For the years 1993 and 1994 respectively, domestic violence occurred at the rate of 4,407 and 4,116 incidents (average of 12 and 11 per day)
- ✔ Alcohol abuse accounts for over 80% of the adult substance abuse problems in Maine
- ✔ The impact of violent crime in Maine was estimated to cost the state $456 million in 1993 alone
- ✔ Twenty-six percent of sexually active youth report not using a reliable method of birth control at the last time of intercourse.*

* 1995 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Today, life in Maine is increasingly one of growing poverty and decreased opportunity for children. Maine was one of only eighteen states where poverty indicators increased (from 15.3 percent of its children living in poverty in 1985 to 18.7 percent 1991); approximately 33 percent of all poor people in Maine are children. These figures changed Maine's national ranking from 10th in 1985 to 20th in 1991. Growing up poor has been associated with a host of negative outcomes for children including less adequate prenatal care, low birth-weight and higher infant mortality, slower cognitive development, as well as lower levels of educational and socioeconomic attainment as adults (Children's Defense Fund, 1991). Implementation of prevention strategies can help communities and schools to combat these negative outcomes for children.

PREVENTION WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Our educational system must be redesigned to provide each child with equal opportunities to learn, which includes resources, practices, and conditions necessary for students to achieve these high standards. Teachers and other educators will need access to effective, research-based practices and resources to provide every child and opportunity to learn.

Current research on effective schools indicates that positive academic and social outcomes in youth are most often realized in schools that are characterized by climates of caring, participation, and high expectations for all students (Rutter, 1979; Wehlage et al, 1989; Benard, 1991). The research of social scientists such as Seymour Sarason, Tohomes Toch, Frank Riessman, and Nel Noddings has pointedly demonstrated that school is first and foremost a social situation, and that "educational change must address the mechanisms which nourish and sustain the life-giving qualities of these relationships" (Weinstein, 1990). The exciting opportunity now exists to connect what works in prevention with what works in improving schools. *Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process* attempts to do just that.

> *Students in today's elementary and middle schools will graduate from high school in the 21st century and enter a world with very different demands compared to those faced by previous generations. As adults in the 21st century, they can expect that 75% of all jobs will require major retraining and new skills every five years just to keep pace in a world where change is constant. To succeed in this era of rapid change, students will need a strong foundation of basics as well as increasingly sophisticated skills which can be easily transferred from situation to situation . . . An educated person is a clear and effective communicator, a self-directed and life long learner, a creative and practical problem solver, a responsible and involved citizen, a collaborative and quality worker, and an integrative and informed thinker.*
>
> State of Maine Learning Results, Draft, November 15, 1995

This excerpt is taken from current work on the development of Learning Results for all Maine students which will identify what all students will know and be able to do as a result of their public education experience. These Learning Results will lead to high academic standards that will challenge all students. The Learning Results are important to assist all children in meeting the challenges of the 21st century. A child's experience in public education must result in an opportunity to be the kind of educated person who can adjust to these constantly changing demands.

Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process is designed to assist people in implementing prevention strategies (see graphic on page one). This *Process* starts with the person in the center, acknowledging an inside-out approach to change. The next component in the model is a set of research-based factors that promote resiliency, focusing on strengths instead of deficits. What follows is a process which recognizes the importance of everyone's involvement. The continuing improvement component recognizes the need to plan systematically, and to continually assess and improve upon current efforts. The last component in the *Process* is a focus on support. Support includes the training, technical assistance, and resources needed to implement effective prevention strategies.

The components of this *Process* are provided with definitions, indicators, and evidence. The definitions are open to interpretation. The indicators are given in order to provide sample targets for your work. The evidence presented are also samples--your evidence will reflect your overall unique efforts.

Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process is a work in progress; we welcome your feedback and involvement. Our hope is that the ideas and concepts presented will enable you to build upon existing efforts on behalf of children and adults in Maine.

WHOLE PERSON

Purpose: At the core of the prevention process is a person--a thinking, feeling, doing being. Self worth (self-esteem) relates directly to a person's physical, social, spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being. As a person engages with his/her environment, a sense of self and who one is in relationship to the world around them develops. By focusing on a person's individual strengths in these areas, the ability to work well, play well, and expect good things in life is created and reinforced. Thus, prevention begins and ends with the whole person as its central focus.

Social

The person who is a positive contributor to family, peers, and community:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Elicits positive responses from others and positively responds	☛ Has some close satisfying relationships in which one feels free to share one's feelings
☛ Is flexible and adaptable when working with people	☛ Has a variety of people from whom one gets his/her needs met
☛ Possesses a sense of humor (the ability to laugh at one's self)	☛ Others say they are happy to be around this person
☛ Establishes positive relationships with others, including friendships and peers	☛ Exhibits good communication skills including active listening

Emotional

Feelings just are. Feelings are important to acknowledge, not as right or wrong, but that there is some place of equilibrium from which moods will swing up or down. The connection from head (thoughts) to heart (feelings) is what make us human, unique, and important to one another. The person who acknowledges the importance of feelings:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Acknowledges and recognizes a difference between thoughts and feelings	☛ Uses assertiveness skills to ask for what one wants or needs
☛ Accepts personal feelings and feelings of others, including feelings one may not like such as anger, hurt, self-pity, jealousy, and guilt	☛ Can identify and express feelings in a healthy and safe manner
☛ Possesses the ability to express feelings in a safe way	☛ Uses refusal skills to resist peer pressure and express feelings
☛ Possesses the ability to resist pressure from others to do things one does not want to do	

Physical

The person who values self through a healthy management of rest, exercise, proper nutrition, and hygiene:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness	☛ Sets and evaluates progress towards physical fitness goals
☛ Comprehends and accepts practices which enhance personal growth and reduces health risks	☛ Uses health skills to improve and maintain good nutrition, safety, first aid, and avoids alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
☛ Uses skills to promote the health of themselves and others	☛ Accesses valid health care services and information when, where, and as needed
☛ Is knowledgeable about resources which provide valid health care and information	☛ Prevents diseases and disorders by living a proactive lifestyle including management of stress, fun, relaxation, meaningful work, rest, exercise, healthy eating, bonding relationships, and regular health assessments

Spiritual (Human Spirit)

A person who has a positive sense of meaning, purpose, loyalty, trust, and commitment to life and oneself:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Has some beliefs or principles that one feels strongly about and tries to live by	☛ Participates in activities which indicate loyalty or dedication to a principle or belief
☛ May have faith in a resource identified as a "power greater than self"	☛ Possesses written principles or beliefs and behaves consistently with those beliefs
☛ Has courage and determination to achieve goals	☛ Has an emotional attachment (passion) for a cause

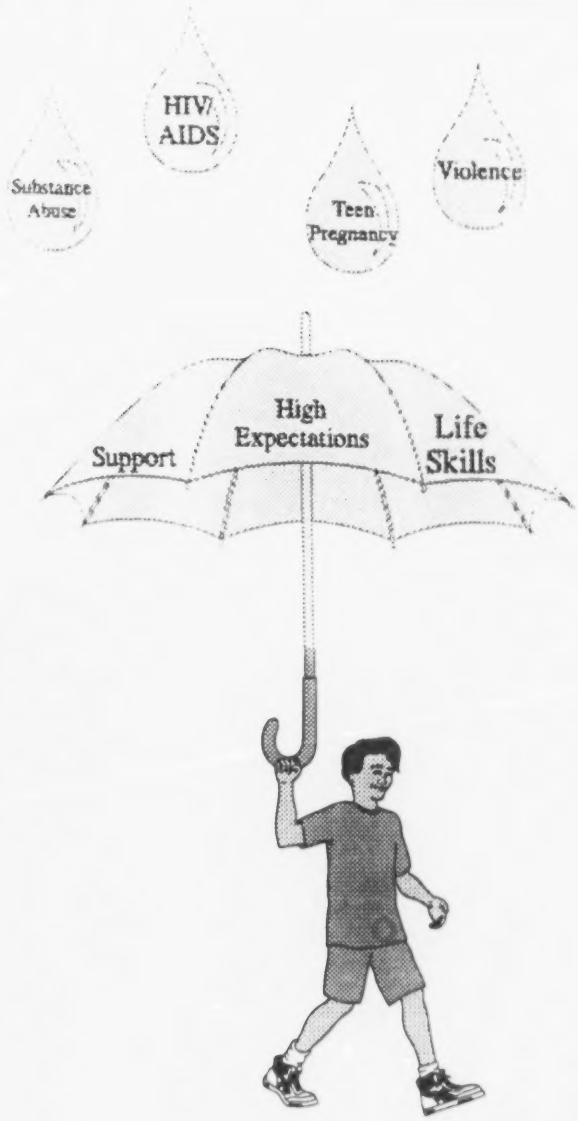
Intellectual

The ability to make rational decisions as a lifelong learner entails many abilities and understanding that there are different learning styles and ways of looking at life. The person who is a lifelong learner:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Has an open mind	☛ Reads for pleasure and information
☛ Possesses problem-solving skills	☛ Makes consistent, effective decisions
☛ Accepts that it is okay to make mistakes as part of the learning process	☛ Exhibits skills and knowledge on an educational assessment (e.g., MEA portfolios)
☛ Is aware of one's learning style	☛ Has a written vision and set of goals to achieve
☛ Uses one's imagination to dream and visualize plans before setting goals	☛ Demonstrates effective problem solving skills
☛ Does things to utilize one's creativity	

FOSTERING RESILIENCE

Purpose: Research tells us that there are six key components to fostering resilience in young people: bonding, life skills, involvement, high expectations, support, and clear policies. Together they comprise an essential foundation for each person being able to reach his or her full potential. Bonding, along with care and support, is important to sustaining both youth and adults. Meaningful, positive interaction with other principled members of the community provides a setting for the development of life skills, self worth, and a sense of accomplishment. High expectations and clear policies provide the framework for clarifying behaviors that are resiliency building.



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Bonding

Bonding youth to principled, caring adults and providing meaningful connections between adults begins to ensure that risks of isolation and its negative effects within our communities are minimized. A community that values bonding:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Nurtures a sense of belonging within neighborhoods and the greater community	☛ Has systems (schools, civic organizations, service clubs, businesses, congregations, etc.)
☛ Exhibits a high level of intergenerational conversation and social networking	☛ Has individuals who greet each other often *by name* as they pass in the community
☛ Promotes establishment of meaningful relationships for *all individuals*	☛ Has an active volunteer program which utilizes multigenerational participants
☛ Respects and acknowledges the individual talents and skills of all members of the community regardless of age	☛ Documents a high number of community members attending community functions
☛ Encourages smiles and eye contact as a normal part of personal conversations	☛ Recognizes achievements of community members through regular activities

Life Skills

Providing training in these essential tools for living ensures that every community member has at his/her disposal strategies to communicate effectively, make sound decisions, successfully negotiate disagreements, establish positive relationships, and be an informed citizen . A community values the development of its members' life skills:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Finds a variety of ways to inform members of how to give effective feedback	☛ Provides members of the community with adequate training to effectively implement life skills training in their work with youth and other community members
☛ Encourages community members to utilize effective refusal skills, problem solving/decision making skills, critical/ consequential thinking skills, negotiation skills, positive relationship skills, and management skills	☛ Provides youth and adults with frequent opportunities in real life situations to utilize learned life skills
☛ Infuses life skills, problem solving/decision making skills, critical/consequential thinking skills, negotiation skills, positive relationship skills, consumer (media) awareness and stress management skills	☛ Demonstrates the successful negotiation of disagreements

Involvement

All members of the community need to engage in activities that will connect them through meaningful positive interaction to other caring principled members of the community. A community that involves all individuals in meaningful ways:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Encourages community organizations and businesses to avoid scheduling conflicts with significant community events and encourage participation in such events	☛ Generates a list of specific youth and adult programs that foster meaningful involvement
☛ Encourages all individuals, regardless of age, to be meaningfully involved in community decision making	☛ Holds open forums regularly to hear from community members of all ages
☛ Provides opportunities for involvement by ALL through community activities which are varied and are designed with input from all segments of the community	☛ Finds ALL community members participating in activities that draw upon their individual interests, strengths, and/or talents including, but not limited to art, music, drama, community organizations, and sports
☛ Encourages organizers of community-wide events to thoughtfully strategize how to more fully involve every member in activities	☛ Has varied community recreation and related programs which are available to physically involve all members regardless of skill level or other limitations

High Expectations

By setting and sustaining high expectations, we support community members in achieving their full potential. This does not mean a "one size fits all" approach, but rather is an effort to heighten each individual's unique potential. A community that has high expectations for itself and its members:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Views and values all community members as resources and learners regardless of age	☛ Is clean and well maintained; damage and/or vandalism are quickly repaired
☛ Has individuals who actively participate in development of a community vision and goals	☛ Has a vision that reflects high expectations
☛ Encourages individuals to model healthy life choices including active participation in chemical-free activities	☛ Maintains a network list of community members and the skills and knowledge they offer
☛ Honors individuals' feelings, opinions, and needs	☛ Has community streets and thoroughfares that are safe and clean
☛ Has members who show pride in their community and indicate a hopefulness for its future	

Care and Support

Providing a climate of care and support recognizes the value of every individual within the community. It establishes a setting in which people strive to do their best because they are working with others who are concerned for them and their welfare. A community that cares for and supports its members:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Honors consistently all individuals feelings, opinions, and needs	☛ Is identified by community members as a safe and caring place
☛ Emphasizes cooperation as much or more than competition in community events	☛ Enables youth to identify adults within the community whom they see as caring for them and accepting them for who they are
☛ Involves community members in community organizations or activities	☛ Has neighborhood welcoming committees and materials that are provided to new community members upon arrival
☛ Affirms and encourages individuals' achievements in diverse areas according to their own interests	☛ Has needed resources that are readily accessible to families (e.g., quality health care, child care, housing, education, job training, employment, recreation)

Clear Policies

The policies of a community:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ State clear expectations for behavior, are developmentally appropriate, increase in severity for repeated offenses, are regularly reviewed, and are consistently enforced	☛ Exist and are understood by community members
☛ Treat all community members equally	☛ Contain a well-defined process of identification and referral of community members in need of support services
☛ Reflect clearly the community philosophy/vision	☛ Contain policy language that support other elements of this circle (i.e., high expectations, means of providing care and support, etc.)
☛ Provide a mechanism for community members experiencing difficulty to easily access appropriate help	☛ Delineate roles and responsibilities of those involved with enforcing the policies

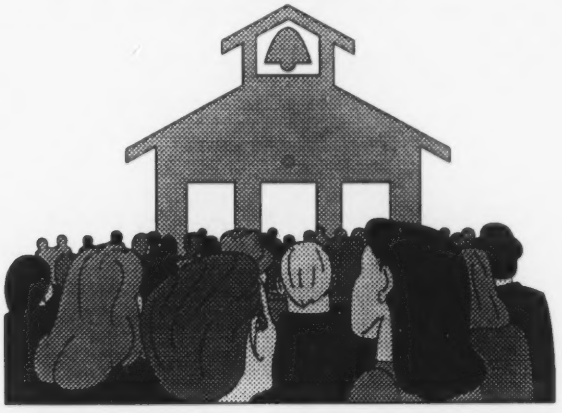
COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS: COMMUNITY, FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND PEERS

"It takes a whole village to raise a child."

Definition: A community has both geographical and political boundaries. It can be defined by language, cultural norms and values, racial identity, or geography which might include school district boundaries, neighborhoods, housing developments, city, county, or others.

Purpose: The ring of the community stakeholders has been included in *Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process* because the community is a key component in prevention. A community that cares about and is committed to all its citizens can mobilize its resources to develop a broad base of support that would allow it to address the prevention of at-risk behaviors and help set the stage for resilient behaviors. A community whose agencies collaborate and coordinate for the good of its citizens is one that will nurture them and help them to be productive and healthy.

Individuals, in order to develop the strength for resiliency, require the support of family, peers, schools, and community. It is an individual as well as an environmental/envirosocial development. "The lesson of recent research seems to be that other people--neighbors, teachers, pastors, and counselors--can still (even if the family unit does not provide emotional support and guidance) take steps to help youth and adults become resilient." For these reasons, the Community Stakeholders ring has been included in *Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process.*



Community

A community that commits itself to renewal and involvement:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Indicates a readiness to acknowledge problems and a belief that prevention efforts can be successful	☛ Possesses a community vision and mission document that has been agreed upon by all members
☛ Adopts policies that promote a healthy environment for all individuals	☛ Develops a written plan of action between community stakeholders for support, maintenance, and renewal of community alliances
☛ Defines common goals and working relationships for families, neighborhoods, schools, and institutions	☛ Notifies the entire community of its activities (if there are parents/guardians in the community who are limited English proficient, notification is made in a language they comprehend. If individuals are deaf, notification is made in a mode they comprehend

Family

The family that sees itself as an integral part of the prevention process:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Knows that the larger community values the importance of the family unit	☛ Sets aside family time for outings, joint meals, family meetings, projects, etc.
☛ Values its stewardship to and participation in the community	☛ Provides a safe, healthy place for all members
☛ Values truth, honesty, love, and commitment	☛ Seeks out help from peers, clergy, counselors, social workers, or other qualified persons when experiencing long-term disruptive problems
☛ Sees the parents and the family as the first and primary "teacher" and caregiver	☛ Provides a nurturing family climate that is supportive of learning

School

A school that sees itself as an integral part of the community prevention process:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Creates a community of learners wherein schools collaborate/partner with community agencies, organizations, and individuals to increase their resourcefulness in making use of learning opportunities	☛ Has a list of active parent/guardian volunteers
☛ Promotes school and community alliances which take place in a wide variety of settings and with a variety of "teachers"	☛ Has a home/school liaison who is knowledgeable about regulations pertaining to children and youth who are homeless
☛ Values and documents learning results appropriately for each learner (can be applied as needed for credentialing and/or official recognition)	☛ Develops alternate learning plans, school-to-work learning plans for all learners (adults and children) and those plans may include activities and learning opportunities throughout the community
☛ Funds before- and after-school programs for children and youth whose parent/guardians are at work	☛ Documents the learning that has taken place in an educational activity (school, in other community settings) from "teachers" in all community settings

Peers

Peers who see themselves as an integral part of the community prevention process:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Seek out and maintain lasting and meaningful friendships	☛ Can name a group of their close friends
☛ Respect each other's individualism and common and diverse interests	☛ Form peer groups (or cross-peer groups) for social activities and projects
☛ Encourage each other to strive for their best	☛ Establish neighborhood watch groups
☛ Acknowledge that one can have peers at several different levels (according to age, common interests, similar careers, etc.)	☛ Participate in training programs for all learners to become peer helpers and peer mediators and to engage in cross-age tutoring

CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Purpose: This is based on an Action Planning Cycle in which three phases--vision, action, and evaluation--each contribute to the improved effectiveness of any program or organization. In order to have a shared vision, communication about values and common purpose must occur among all stakeholders. The shared vision in turn informs planning and action. Assessment informs whether action has resulted in moving toward the vision and provides for further planning, action, or revisioning.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO THE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, SEE APPENDICES.

Shared Vision

A shared vision is an important tool. The vision includes those beliefs and values which the community stakeholders have in common about prevention. It is critical that before the community vision is created, individuals examine and share their personal values and beliefs. Stakeholders must continually ask: "Will this decision, action, or policy move us closer to the picture we have of the future?" A community that has a shared vision:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Ensures that the vision is shared by all stakeholders	☛ Adopts a vision statement, in written or other visual form
☛ Understands the implications of the vision to the work efforts of each stakeholder	☛ Maintains and circulates meeting minutes which reflect that decisions are made based on whether or not they will further the vision
☛ Evaluates accountability and progress based on the vision	☛ Documents involvement of key stakeholders, including youth, in the creation of the shared vision and its application

Action Plan

A way to make significant change in communities is to get a clear picture of the desired future (the vision) and then engage in a strategic plan to attain the vision. The resulting action plan maps out the steps necessary for the community to get from where they are to where they want to be. A community that develops an action plan:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Includes all stakeholders in the discussion, including youth	☛ Writes and agrees upon a list of outcomes and activities
☛ Identifies activities necessary to realize the vision	☛ Establishes and documents a timeline for activities
☛ Knows how resources will be allocated to reach the vision	☛ Generates a list of resources necessary
☛ Identifies what will be measured to evaluate success	☛ Identifies individuals responsible for activities

Assessment

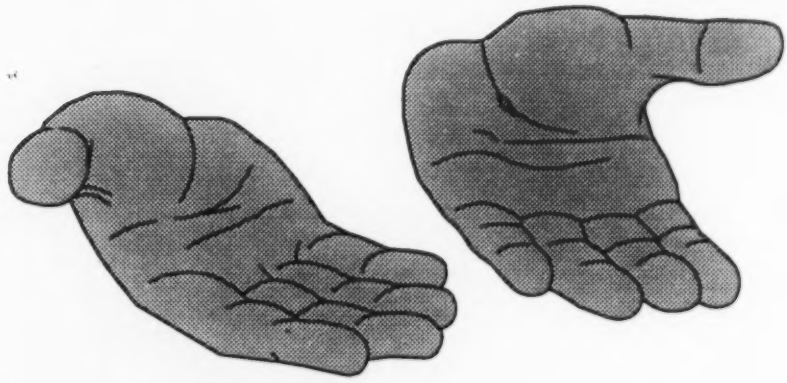
Assessment and analysis help to determine what has changed and provide feedback in order to improve efforts. Careful assessment allows one to know where they are, where success had occurred, and what to do next. A community that is committed to assessing itself:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Identifies areas of need, action steps, and strategies to evaluate progress	☛ Creates outcomes of the Action Plan that are measurable
☛ Ties assessment activities and the measurement of success toward attaining the vision	☛ Communicates data used for decision making to all stakeholders
☛ Identifies and uses numerous assessment strategies	☛ Includes portfolios, surveys, videos, evaluation, etc., as part of the documentation
☛ Uses data to inform future decisions	☛ Measures outcomes of the Action Plan

SUPPORT

Purpose: The Support component of *Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process* represents three broad categories that help to define the kinds of support any individual and/or group may need in order to foster resiliency among children and adults. This component is part of *Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process* because implementing effective prevention strategies requires people to learn from and support one another.

The overall goal of the Support component is to design and maintain ways to learn from one another. It recognizes everyone involved as a resource and expert, and realizes diversity as a strength. The Support component lives and breathes the fact that all large scale change is implemented locally. The end results of this component are success stories that are well documented and told and re-told across the state.



Training

Training includes any aspect of professional and/or personal development that builds capacity. Training is a key component of Support because it recognizes the need for new skills and knowledge in order to continuously improve one's efforts. A community that supports its members through training:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Provides training just before and linked to implementation	☛ Includes training dates in the Action Plan
☛ Bases training on local needs	☛ Documents local training needs
☛ Bases the training on current research	☛ Connects outcomes to research
☛ Views participants as experts	☛ Has outcomes that are culturally based

Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance is provided based on locally identified needs and creates more opportunities for people to learn from one another. A community that supports its members through technical assistance:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Provides services that are regional or site specific	☛ Evaluates services in a positive manner
☛ Bases technical assistance	☛ Connect outcomes to research
☛ Includes models for problem solving	☛ Documents problem-solving needs
☛ Builds capacity at local level	☛ Includes local support networks in technical assistance events

Resources

Resources include the traditional resources such as money, people, equipment, time, and information. Resources need to include everyone involved in delivering and receiving services. Resources include opportunities for people to take care of themselves. A community that supports its members through optimum utilization of resources:

Indicators	Evidence
☛ Supports planning for positive change as a journey	☛ Links assessments to improvements
☛ Includes a variety of assessment tools	☛ Allows people time to plan, dialogue, etc.
☛ Is dedicated to providing people time	☛ Budgets money to support activities

- ☛ Focuses on system components and culture
- ☛ Documents personal/professional growth

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Appendices

Appendix A . . . . . Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process (Graphic for Schools)

Appendix B . . . . . Educational Phases of the Continuum Defined

Appendix C . . . . . Continuing Improvement Plan

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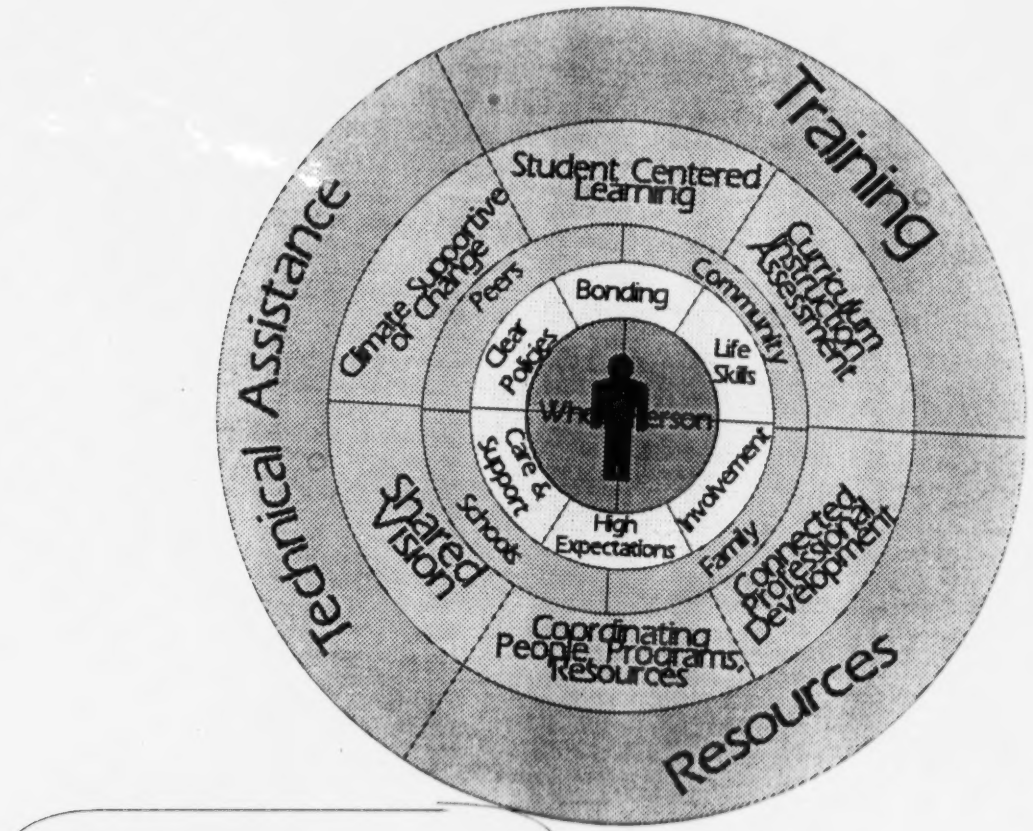
Fostering Hope: A Prevention Process



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Phases of the Continuum

The following narratives describe characteristics of systems at each of the phases of the continuum. Reference these descriptors as you move through the self-assessment process.

EXPLORING

The district may have a broad range of excellent programs designed to meet the needs of all students. However, these programs are not well-connected to each other across the district. Individual schools within the district may have developed a shared vision based on common beliefs about teaching, learning and education and may have also agreed on what students should know and be able to do by the time they leave the school, but there is not agreement about these things across the entire district. Students in one elementary school, for example, may be working toward a different set of learning results than those in another elementary school down the road. In general, districts in this phase have not involved the community in discussions of what students should know and be able to do, although individual schools may have done so. The School Board may have not been involved in these discussions or established this as a priority for their own work. Districts in this phase may also experience curriculum, instruction and assessment as three distinct aspects of schooling. Teacher-designed "authentic" and performance assessment may be present in the district, but is not part of the actual curriculum which most students experience in the classroom. Instructional practices which vary the roles of teachers and emphasize the application of knowledge across disciplines may also be present in the district, but not available for most students.

A.

Staff are involved in curriculum design and in planning staff development activities and there is time built into the school year for teachers to explore education theory and practice. Individual schools may provide additional time during the school day for teachers to plan and learn together, but the district as a whole does not provided daily time uniformly across grade levels. There is a district-wide belief that new structures for staff learning and planning need to be designed and that new structures for student learning merit exploration.

In this phase, there may be concern about how the community feels about school change and about the degree of risk involved in beginning the process of self-examination. Relationships within schools, across schools and with the community seem to be a primary focus area for the district.

Individual schools may stay within this phase for up to two years, depending on the climate issues which need to be addressed. Toward the later stages of work, the district will begin piloting new structures; curriculum, instruction and assessment connections will be made at the classroom and school levels; and the School Board will adopt a shared vision, and learning results with indicators will be developed. The School Board will also be knowledgeable about the implications of this work for the district as a whole.

TRANSITIONING

In this phase, the pilots undertaken toward the end of the exploring period have been partially implemented in selected schools and grade levels, but key elements of the previous system are still in place. Staff learning is moving at an exponential rate and reflection about practice is common. Staff feel stressed by competing demands and are active in seeking much more daily and yearly time to learn, plan and pilot new ideas. Teachers have the authority and responsibility to design new structures and focus on relationships, and some time has been provided for them to do so. Staff development activities are almost completely integrated with what teachers need to learn in order to continue the design and reflection process. For the most part, the community supports the implementation of the pilots of the previous phase, and new mechanisms are being developed to keep the community involved and informed. As a result, some changes in parent-teacher conferences and open house are made, so that parents can learn as much as possible about the effects of new practices and understand the implications of the vision and the learning results. Teachers from different schools meet routinely to explore common issues and develop teacher-to-teacher solutions. The emphasis is shifting from outside experts leading discussions and workshops to leadership by staff within the district.

As gradual changes are implemented, the staff and the district leadership become acutely aware of how much they hope to accomplish. As local authentic and performance assessments are developed and receive more widespread use at all grade levels, teachers find themselves using two assessment systems. The work involved motivates teachers to examine the entire array of assessment students experience and decisions begin to be made about the assessment across the district. Reports to parents, students and the community about student progress change as a result. Views of curriculum, instruction and assessment are very different than in the previous phase. Teachers develop their own internal maps to connect curriculum, instruction and assessment across the developmental stages continually being developed and shared across the district. Teachers actively seek to deepen their knowledge and skill across many dimensions. Consequently, more and more students are being directly impacted by changes in practice. Students are also part of the district's decision making process regarding proposed changes.

Ideas about how to make the learning environment more responsive to students and teachers leads to changes in the daily and yearly schedule, but these changes are not yet as far-reaching as the district sees they could be. All aspects of the system are open for discussion, evaluation, and redesign by all members of the district and the community.

The School Board begins to use the vision and the learning results as the filter for policy development and decision making. This process begins to result in new teacher evaluation criteria and systems, in changing expectations for school-wide and district level leadership, and in a new optimism regarding the possibilities of contract negotiations, bus schedules and other aspects of daily district operation. There are specific plans to extend implementation of changes across the district to all students in all schools. Toward the end of this phase, the system begins to abandon previous structures as widespread implementation takes place. However, no one in the system is satisfied or believes that the new structures solve all problems or address all issues. In fact, there is a common belief that the change process has finally just begun.

TRANSFORMING

There is no description of this phase. To define it precisely is to limit the possibilities. The best description of this phase is the beliefs about teaching, learning and education which are embedded in Maine's Common Core of Learning.

Characteristics may include:

"Every child can claim a promising future, because each enjoys an equal opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to participate in shaping Maine's future.

There is equal opportunity to learn which is ensured by a common set of learning results which embody high expectations for all students. The learning results, and the standards of achievement based upon them, are the work of teachers, parents and citizens across the state.

The community determines the strategies it will use to help its children reach the learning results. Learning teams, which include students, parents, and teachers develop and periodically review multi-year personalized education plans for all students. Student progress is assessed regularly, using a variety of methods which help students demonstrate what they know and can do. Students advance through school based on their progress in achieving the learning results. Each student, by actively participating in the development of a personal learning plan, understands the expected responsibility by choosing activities which lead to rigorous intellectual growth.

Educators are mentors who guide the learning process. They use a variety of engaging strategies to support students' personal learning plans. They benefit from teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities emphasizing new technologies and approaches effective in helping students reach the learning results. Educators utilize these approaches as a springboard to help them design creative ways to personalize education for each student.

Every citizen is a lifelong learner. Schools therefore are the educational service centers for all residents in each community. Learning activities continue all day, every day, and learning groups are multi-aged and inter-generational. As education centers, schools use telecommunications, technology-intensive library and media centers and other technological tools to advance learning. The community itself is used as a classroom to address multi-cultural concerns, and environmental issues. Businesses provide additional avenues for students to use in learning, and post-secondary education contributes its learning resources to support both adults and students. Through all of these activities and the involvement of all segments of the community, the community itself takes responsibility for helping its students reach the common learning results.

Accountability for ensuring that all students continue to progress toward the learning results is shared by all the stakeholders -- students, parents, educators, community members and policy makers. Policy makers act on the belief that our top priority is to create and maintain an environment in which all students can and do achieve the learning results."

Adapted from "A Vision For Education in Maine;" Task Force on Learning Results Plan for education in Maine; February 1994.

GUIDE PAGE
I. Student Centered Learning

Appendix C

Purpose:
A reason for making changes in the current structure and practice of public education is to ensure that all students have an equal and appropriate opportunity to learn to high standards. What students know and can do, how they learn, and how they demonstrate this by the time they leave school must be the determining factor for all that is done in schools. The entire public education system, from the classroom to state government must be flexible enough to adjust continually to the varied and changing learning need of all Maine students. The nature and needs of all learners should be at the center of educational decision making. We are striving to create a learning environment in which all of the pieces are aligned with and influenced by all of the other pieces. At the heart of everything is what students know and can do and how we (teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, community members, and officials) act on the belief that all students can learn.

Exploring	Transitioning	Transforming
Indicators:		
- Some students with special needs have individual learning plans; these plans are sometimes difficult to implement within the current education structure. - Schedules have a high priority in decision making about student learning; - Few students have access to learning opportunities which span grade levels; - Assessment information used to plan student learning comes primarily from standardized testing sources; - Some resources which support student learning are organized into specific programs or projects for specific student populations	-As teachers collect and analyze more of their own information about what students know and can do, the daily and yearly schedule begins to change to reflect student learning needs; - Formal and informal opportunities for teachers and parents to work together to support student learning increase; - Teachers' pilots of new instructional and assessment approaches result in plans to extend these pilots across the district; - Throughout the district, there are many examples of the implementation of new approaches to teaching and learning, but they operate side-by-side with elements of the traditional system (report cards and teacher narratives of student progress, for example); - Teachers and administrators feel the stress of two approaches operating simultaneously; - There is both frustration and a new optimism.	- The community believes that all children can learn; - The learning styles and needs of students have created diverse teaching strategies and flexibility in curriculum content and pacing; - Accountability for student learning is shared by students, parents, educators and the community; - Education is personalized in creative ways for each student; - All students have equal and appropriate opportunities to achieve the learning results; - The learning environment supports student strengths, needs and circumstances; - Professional development activities are based on the knowledge and skills educators need in order to meet student learning needs; - Students advance through school based on demonstration of mastery of the learning results rather than age or grade placement; - There are multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they know and can do

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Evidence
- High expectations/standards are explicit for all;
- Learning teams include students, parents and teachers;
- The learning environment supports student strengths, needs and circumstances;
- Diversity in student education programs provided through a variety of :
  - teaching strategies
  - curriculum materials

GUIDE PAGE
II. Aligned Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Purpose:

When curriculum, instruction and assessment are aligned with each other and connected daily in the classroom, a continuous cycle of reevaluation of each area is common practice. It becomes increasingly difficult and unnecessary for teachers to distinguish between the three areas, since each is so closely connected to the others. The learning results are the filter and the rationale for all that is done for all students in all three areas. By "planning backwards" from the learning results, teachers have the freedom and flexibility to meet the individual needs of all students.

Indicators:

Exploring	Transitioning	Transforming
- Instructional strategies are connected more to the individual strengths and experiences of teachers than to a district-wide effort to match instruction to all student needs; - The sequence of curriculum review and development is institutionalized on a rotating cycle; - There is some continuity in curriculum content K-12; - The MEA and other standardized tests are used to make some curriculum and instructional decisions; - The focus of professional development is varied, with many options offered to teachers each year.	- Learning results have been developed by educators and community members working together; - Teacher reflection about practice is common throughout most of the system; - Teachers from different schools meet routinely to explore common issues and develop solutions to common problems; - Teacher-designed student assessment begins to be used to make decisions about curriculum and instruction; - The district begins to create an assessment system, which includes, but is not limited to, standardized measures; - Curriculum is developed constantly and is often integrated across disciplines;	- There is widespread agreement within the community that the district will work to support all students in reaching the learning results; - Students are provided with a variety of ways to demonstrate what they know and can do; - Curriculum and instruction are based on information collected through a comprehensive district-wide assessment system

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Evidence:

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- District-wide learning results
- Process/Policy for developing C-I-A
- Committee configuration(s)
- Evaluation plan(s)
- Documentation of assessment practices

III. Shared Vision

Purpose:

No change is possible in the learning of all students unless both the district and the community agree that there is more that can be done to ensure this equal opportunity to learn. A shared vision is the first tool districts use to begin to create an environment in which necessary changes can occur. The vision includes those beliefs and values which the district and the community have in common about teaching, learning and education. These beliefs, combined with common agreement about what all local students should know and be able to do, leads to the development of a concrete, specific picture of what the district will look and be like in the future -- the vision. By continually asking: "Will this action or policy move the district closer to the picture we have of the future?" educators and community members can make better decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment, schedules, and the allocation of resources.

Indicators:

Exploring	Transitioning	Transforming
- Philosophy, mission, or goals statement may exist in individual schools or at the district level.; - These statements sometimes drive decision making; - There is recognition of the need for a shared vision; - Individuals and small groups may have strongly-held visions of teaching, learning and education; - All or most schools are working individually; - Lines of accountability for student learning and development are unclear across the district and with the community	- There is a shared vision; - Parents and community members understand the implications of the vision for curriculum, instruction and assessment and the daily and yearly schedules for teaching and learning; - Movement of the district toward the vision can be documented; - The school board has adopted the vision and publicly supports it; - The vision is constantly referred to and continually evolving; - Most policies and practices are in alignment with the beliefs and shared vision	- The concrete picture of the future developed in the exploring phase is revised or rewritten as educators and community members see further ahead; - All decisions at every level of the system are driven by the vision; - The district can easily document that all children have an equal opportunity to learn to high standards; - Accountability and progress are evaluated based on the vision

Evidence

- District-wide shared vision statement

If the school district has not yet had a school/community conversation around a vision for the education of all the children, the following pieces of evidence may support where the system currently is:

- Belief statements
- System Philosophy
- School-wide Vision statements
- Mission statements

GUIDE PAGE
IV. Climate Supportive of Change

Purpose:

"Climate" is defined as the description of "how we do things here" -- both those overt policies, procedures, and practices which are written down as well as the unwritten rules about what is permissible and possible and what is not. Each school, each community, and each district has an identifiable climate which gives people strong messages about acceptable behavior. These messages will motivate people toward or away from certain actions. How and what information is communicated, how people respond to conflict and disagreement, how people interact with each other, and how decisions are made are all factors which impact climate.

Assessing the indicators of a climate supportive of change and flexibility in meeting student needs may be the most difficult of all the self assessment areas because assessment itself may not be an acceptable activity within the current climate. However, without attention to the factors which build climate, changes in current practice will be very difficult. A climate supportive of change is an invaluable tool in building a learning environment around what students need. Developing a shared vision can lay the foundation for improving the working relationships of adults, but some preliminary work on climate may be necessary before a vision can be truly shared.

Indicators:

Exploring	Transitioning	Transforming
- A small number of individuals are fully informed and communicate clearly and regularly; - There is a highly sophisticated "grapevine"; - Community members may be involved in the district as volunteers and on some advisory committees; - Decisions within the district are made through a hierarchy of authority	- Educators actively seek much more daily and yearly planning and development time together and the community generally supports changes in the schedule which allow this; - The district begins to develop and implement new ways for students, parents, community members, and other stakeholders to learn to accept responsibility for learning and work together; - Most community members know what is happening and why in the district, but many continue to ask good questions about why the district is doing what it is doing; the district views this as a positive sign of support; - Connections, communications and relationships among people has a high priority	- The process of aligning beliefs and practice is a continual one; - The community actively supports strategies and system changes which will help all students learn; - Individuals within the district feel that their strengths and differences are respected; - Divergent points of view are seen as valuable contributions to problems solving; - Adults seek opportunities to work together and have developed effective ways to make decisions and solve problems, use conflict productively, and build ownership; - Celebrations are frequent and often spontaneous

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Evidence:

- Strategies in place for educators to plan and work together
- Process for conflict resolution
- Protocol for decision-making
- Meeting Format(s)
- Descriptions of new idea/techniques that have been piloted
- Process in place for recognizing and honoring good teaching practice
- Documented occasions for the celebration of significant

GUIDE PAGE

V. Connected Professional Development

Purpose:

Professional development is another necessary tool in helping all students reach the learning results. It is part of the process of developing a shared vision, and can lead to a climate supportive of change. The definition of professional development is very broad; should include all district staff and encompass everything the district does to increase their knowledge and skill. Activities may include visits to other districts and other classrooms, conference and workshop attendance, professional libraries, recertification activities, common planning time, staff meetings, committee and team meetings, and all local research. Many of the chosen activities should include parents, community members, and the school board.

Indicators:

Exploring	Transitioning	Transforming
- A wide variety of professional development activities are offered; - Activities are frequently planned and led by people outside the district; - The range of activities includes conference attendance and workshops; most other activities are regarded as separate from "professional development"; - There are some mechanisms in place for sharing information collected at conferences and workshops outside the district	- Staff development activities are substantially integrated with the shared vision and the local learning results; - Most educators can articulate the knowledge and skills they need in order to move the district closer to the vision; - Most professional development activities are planned and led by internal experts; - Professional development activities have a high priority within the district and the community	- Professional development activities and systemic improvement activities are viewed by staff and community as the same work; - All professional development opportunities are focused on the support of student learning; - The development of all educators (teachers, administrators, school board members, and support staff) is addressed; - Professional development activities consistently lead to change in practice; - Professional development activities model the methods educators are expected to learn as a result

Evidence:

- School calendar/date for release time
- Professional development plan and process for how created
- Policies & procedures for professional development
- Process for resource allocation to support professional development

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VI. Coordinated People, Programs, and Resources

Purpose:

When educators learn of a new idea or identify a new student need, the tendency is to create a new program or design a special project. Over the years, these programs and projects accumulate across the district, utilizing time and resources. Some of them have collected important information about student learning and development which would be useful throughout the district, and most serve specific student populations. As the district works toward its vision and learning results, these programs can be models for strategies which are beneficial to all students, the people responsible for them can contribute a great deal to the entire improvement effort, and the resources allocated to them can be used to expand the work to more students and staff. Time and resources are finite and need to be allocated where each will bring the biggest benefits for students. The goal in this area is two-fold. First, to identify and utilize all of the local expertise and models available so that they benefit all students. Second, to make the most of the staff time and the district's current resources so that improvement and redesign are focused on the most important and far-reaching activities.

Indicators:

Exploring	Transitioning	Transforming
- Some connections are routinely made between programs; - People within the district have opportunities to work together across schools and grade levels; - A small group of people know what all the programs and committees in the district are	- Decisions about people, programs, and resources begin to be made based on what all students need; this process is often painful; - Creative use of time and resources is openly encouraged; - Educators feel the stress of operating special programs while simultaneously developing ways to eliminate the necessity of using them	- Decisions about resources are based on the vision and on what all students need in order to learn well; - Programs and special projects are not institutionalized; they are developed in response to student needs and are continually changes as a result; - The communities in the district and the people within them are classrooms for student learning.

Evidence:

- Processes used for connecting & communicating about P-P-R
- Policies for program development
- Resource Allocation guidelines

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